

**Renee Michaels
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In Opposition to HB-5334; SB-725

Dear House Energy and Technology Committee member:

Going Green is everything. Green is the Gold standard.

Green is what we teach our children in school, how we live our daily lives and how we develop our future in accordance with Government, Economic and Environmental leaders.

It is good public policy.

HB-5334 and S-725 go exactly opposite of this, under the guise of generating more methane gas at landfills.

MY OWN PERSPECTIVE

I make my living recycling. And it is good for Michigan.

Yard waste, especially leaves, has become the carbon source greatly needed to recycle other materials such as food waste and more importantly manure generated by farms.

Brown fields can be cleaned with the utilization of compost.

Our basic life necessities are food and water.

Urban farming is spreading in Michigan and especially in the City of Detroit. I personally have been delivering materials to gardens being established in the City of Detroit as recently as last week. By utilizing finished compost and not chemical fertilizers, these individuals are growing healthy crops and protecting our valuable water resources at the same time.

THE OPPOSITION TO GREEN

Yard waste will fill up landfills at a faster rate. Landfill space is finite. We continue to take in Canadian trash with this limited space. Would we consider taking in trash from another country?

Composting takes a waste product and through nature, turns it into a green product.

During testimony last week there were **NO SPECIFICS** presented to this committee that by allowing yard waste back to the landfills of how much more methane would be captured. If this is the intent of this legislation, shouldn't that be articulated to weigh the benefit?

Testimony from Grainger last week before this committee, stated that they need the yard waste for methane and do not want to make the investment without yard waste compost being allowed back into the landfill.

Pushing yard waste back to the landfills is not going to create new jobs, but rather cancel out quite a few existing ones.

There are more than 120 registered compost sites in Michigan that have invested in property, equipment and provide hundreds of jobs. These employees soon will be joining our long list of unemployment if this bill is passed.

Very simply, commercial composting in Michigan will end if this proposal becomes the new law.

These 120 business, including mine will close. Our employees will be out of work, and our businesses added to the long list of properties for sale.

Key Points

- The MDEQ is opposed to passing HB 5334 and SB 725
- Jobs will be lost with no new ones will be created
- Landfills are already capture methane and nothing was presented as to how much more would be generated by using yard waste
- Grainger specified they did not want to make the investment in capturing methane unless the bill was passed
- 120 registered sites that have made the investment in both property and equipment will be forced to close.
- This will affect suppliers and customers i.e. Michigan Cat, AIS equipment, gardeners, farmers, recyclers, the bagging people that blend our compost with other amendments to sell.
- It will shorten the life of our landfills.
- It eliminates the production of topsoil.
- Alternative topsoil comes from stripping construction sites. Building is at a virtual standstill so that is becoming scarce. Not only that, site topsoil does not have the nutrient value that compost has.
- Leaves are an important carbon source utilized to safely process manure and other materials.
- If compost is not available then more individuals will return to utilizing chemical fertilizers that pollute our Great Lakes.
- Compost also helps to promote crop growth in dry conditions because it holds water like a sponge and less water application is required.

I strongly urge you to VOTE NO on HB-5334.

And GO GREEN, not go backwards.

Sincerely,



Renee Michaels

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<http://detroitnews.com/article/20091010/METRO/910100364>

Massive algae blooms threaten Lake Erie

JIM LYNCH
The Detroit News

Luna Pier

In 75 years of living near these waters, Loris Jenkins never saw anything like what she came across this summer. A cruise on Lake Erie in a friend's pontoon boat looked like something out of a science fiction movie.

The lake waters were covered by something -- a bright green mass, seemingly everywhere she looked -- that the boat sliced through as it motored off Luna Pier, a city of 1,400 residents on Michigan's Lake Erie shore. Jenkins, who has lived a block from the beach for more than half a century, is used to dealing with algae, but this was something different.

"It was just so... icky," she said. "I was sickened by it."

Lake Erie is under attack from algae in a way not seen since the late 1960s and early 1970s. And this is more than just an aesthetic problem. Among the species of algae that are fouling beaches, harming wildlife and threatening drinking water is a toxic form that has scientists around the lake scrambling to control it.

That form -- known as *Microcystis* or blue-green algae -- is prevalent enough to be seen by from space as it clogs parts of the western half of Lake Erie. More than 25 miles of the lake's coastline is in Michigan and most of Metro Detroit falls in the Lake Erie watershed.

Lakes throughout the region are increasingly encountering problems caused by algae. In Lake Huron, increases in *Spirogyra* and *Cladophora* prompted the state to enact the Saginaw Bay Coastal Initiative to identify and address the factors causing the growth, but Huron's problems don't include significant blue-green algae.

For humans, the consequences of exposure to *Microcystis* are skin irritation and nausea.

The dangerous algae began cropping up on Lake Erie in the mid-1990s, the first algae to pose a real problem in decades. Since then, each year has been progressively worse in the western half of the lake. In 2006, another kind of algae, the nontoxic *Lyngbya*, began appearing as well.

"The *Lyngbya* is newly invasive in this area," said Thomas Bridgeman, an assistant professor at the University of Toledo's Lake Erie Center. "We are not exactly sure whether it's always been here at low levels, or if it's new to the area."

The algae are a growing problem that has no foreseeable end; conservationists and environmental groups are raising an alarm.

"This is a sign of trouble on Lake Erie," said Sandy Bihn, of the nonprofit Western Lake Erie Waterkeeper Association, an Oregon, Ohio-based group that deals with environmental issues. "I think we're headed for national headlines. It's very troubling and very serious."

An easy target

In the 1970s, Lake Erie became an easy target for ridicule. A Time magazine mention of the 1969 fire on the Cuyahoga River helped get the ball rolling. Eight years later, NBC's "Saturday Night Live" featured Bill Murray in a fake advertisement for a mineral water called Swill, "the water that's dredged from Lake Erie."

With that ridicule came action. Local, state and federal officials began tackling the factors contributing to the lake's failing health: sewage overflows, waste treatment plants and the drainage of high levels of phosphorus from farms. Laws were enacted that helped identify pollution and reduce its impacts.

Researchers believe those steps successfully curbed the flow of particulate phosphorus into Lake Erie, but left the door open for another form -- dissolved phosphorus. A nutrient prominent in fertilizers, detergents, sewage and industry, phosphorus is necessary for algae to grow and when it is present in abundance, algae often is as well.

Dissolved phosphorus comes from soil runoff and erosion and its presence in the lake has become increasingly hard to ignore. The city of Toledo currently spends between \$3,000 and \$4,000 a day treating water affected by algae.

"This year has been particularly bad," said David Baker, a biology professor at Heidelberg University in Tiffin, Ohio, and founder of the school's National Center for Water Quality Research. "A lot of people had thought (the spread of algal blooms) was an aspect of high levels of nutrients like phosphorus and warmer weather. Well, we had significant blooms again this summer despite seeing lower temperatures."

While southeastern Michigan contributes about half of the point-source phosphorus that ends up in Lake Erie, according to Baker, Michigan remains a relatively minor player in the drive to combat the problem.

"We have to prioritize our resources where we can have the greatest effect," said Bob McCann, a spokesman for the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. "Here, that's in Lake Huron and, particularly, in Saginaw Bay."

John Giszczak, the owner-operator of Stray Cat Charter Fishing at the Luna Pier Harbour Club, said he frequently navigates through pea-green algal blooms when taking clients to fish for perch and walleye.

"I've been fishing for 16 years on this lake, and the blue-green algae we saw years ago looked like a hockey puck," he said. "What we're getting now is this yellow-green stuff and it looks like a blanket over the lake."

Specific trigger unidentified

Calling out the agriculture industry is premature, according to Larry Antosch, senior director of program innovation and environmental policy for the Ohio Farm Bureau. Antosch and Baker sit on the Lake Erie Commission, charged with understanding the issues impacting the water.

"There is some suspicion but we don't have enough data to say exactly what's happening," Antosch said. "We know we're dealing with watersheds that are heavily agricultural and that the water leaving those watersheds is influenced by how the land is used. Right now, we can't identify a specific trigger."

If reducing phosphorus in the watershed is necessary, Antosch said, it should be done based on data.

Other theories also have gained traction.

Erie is the shallowest of the Great Lakes, 210 feet at its deepest with an average depth of 62 feet. It is also a key component of the lakes shipping system. That lack of depth requires the shipping channels to be dredged routinely of sediment.

When that material is dumped in the open water of Lake Erie, the phosphorus it contains -- once dormant -- helps spur algae blooms and also creates the no-oxygen "dead zones" that have been detected, Bridgeman said.

Invasive species, such as the zebra mussel, have compounded the problem.

They lie on the lake bottom and secrete phosphorus, helping fuel algae growth.

While researchers like Baker believe the bulk of the phosphorus creating the algal blooms comes from Ohio -- sources like the Maumee and Ottawa rivers -- that's only part of the story.

Most of southeastern Michigan lies within the Erie watershed, drained through the Huron and Rouge Rivers and their tributaries.

"The Detroit River has a big impact on the upper Lake Erie Basin," said Robert Burns, the Detroit riverkeeper. "The river is contributing to the problem."

Whatever its source, for people like Luna Pier resident Jenkins, algae is changing traditions.

"When I was a kid, this was such a beautiful lake," she said. "We were out here playing all the time and you couldn't get me out of the water. But this summer... you couldn't get me in there."

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